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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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One more debate, and then the elections will be upon us a couple of weeks later. The "excitement" is almost all over, at least for the crying! At the moment, it seems that either candidate has a better-than-average chance to win - the polls are that close (if you hold any credence to them). The gloves are still off between these two candidates, but understandable with the stakes so high. Get your scorecards out!

Our family issues are still on-going. While the long saga with my in-laws has almost come to an end, the situation within my own family is about to really begin. After an extended period of time waiting for the probate process to be resolved due to some ridiculous protests by my brother, a decision has finally been made regarding the handling of my father’s estate. Essentially, my brother made the process and decision quite simple by failing to appear at a required court hearing. Now the legal process can commence, but I seriously doubt that it will be smooth!

Speaking of "scary" situations, we celebrate Halloween next week. While there’s no surprise snowstorm predicted for next week like we experienced last year, we are facing the threat of Hurricane Sandy! While my area will likely not be facing a dierct hit, the forecast does call for some extreme effects. So, play it safe. If the holiday participants are out in the streets celebrating, please pay attention and drive safely on Halloween night! Have a safe and fun holiday!

Until next time...

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Sony Announces Major Layoffs!
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Sony Announces Major Layoffs as Part of Restructuring Plan

Back in April, it was rumored that Sony under significant financial duress would soon lay off 10,000 workers, or about 6% of the company. Sony later confirmed the plans, noting that they anticipate hitting their goal by the end of 2012 in a bit to regain global competitiveness.

Today, Reuters has revealed that a phase of that plan is underway, though they ve now pushed back the trimming of its global headcount by 10,000 [workers] to March of 2013.

The report notes that Sony will cut staff at its Gifu, Japan headquarters by one-fifth (or about 2,000 workers) and close factories dedicated to the creation of mobile phones and camera lenses. Additionally, 1,800 more workers will be lost at a chemical business that Sony unloaded to a Japanese bank.

Sony operations in Europe will also be affected. 2,000 workers are expected to lose their jobs there, half at a joint mobile phone venture with Ericsson that recently ran its course. To reach the 10,000 worker mark, the remaining job losses will be at other factories around the world, Reuters report states.

Predating Sony s announcement of the massive restructuring, the company reported a loss of over $2 billion. Things are improving at Sony, however; while still in the red, the company only reported a $312 million loss in August, indicating that Sony s serious financial wounds may be healing.

Indeed, Sony s hope is to save $378.6 million a year by cutting these 10,000 jobs, indicating that, if the company reports a similar financial situation at the end of this quarter, they may be back in the black.

Our best go out to all affected by the layoffs.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Hillary Clinton: The U.S. Doesn't Rely on Facebook for Intelligence

The Obama administration came under fire on Wednesday after Reuters and Fox News reported that internal State Department emails revealed that an Islamic militant group immediately claimed responsibility for the Benghazi attacks on social media platforms, but this afternoon, Hillary Clinton fired back saying U.S. intelligence isn't based on random

Facebook posts.

"Posting something on Facebook is not in and of itself evidence," Clinton told the AP while at the State Department. "I think it just underscores how fluid the reporting was at the time and continued for some time to be."

The popular social network became the center of attention after Reuters' Mark Hosenball reported that a State Department e-mail sent to the White House Situation Room and other agencies noted that the Al Qaeda-affiliated group Ansar al-Sharia claimed responsibility for last month's deadly attack on Facebook and Twitter. "Embassy Tripoli reports the group claimed responsibility on Facebook and Twitter and has called for an attack on Embassy Tripoli," read the message. It was sent at 6 p.m. Washington time on September 11. The revelation lit up the blogosphere drawing scrutiny from conservative outlets from National Review to The Washington Times as to why the administration wasn't quicker to blame the Al Qaeda-linked group.

But Clinton, who has largely avoided the daily scrum of accusations, rebuttals and denials related to the Benghazi controversy, insisted that time was needed to parse out the conflicting evidence related to the Benghazi attack. "The independent accountability review board is already hard at work looking at everything, not cherry picking one story here or one document there, but looking at everything - which I highly recommend as the appropriate approach for something as complex as an attack like this," she said.

Reaffirming the view that stray Facebook postings are not to be trusted as gospel, White House press secretary Jay Carney told reporters that after the original Facebook posting, the same group later denied responsibility for the attack. "This was an open-source, unclassified email about a posting on a Facebook site. I would also note I think that within a few hours, that organization itself claimed that it had not been responsible. Neither should be taken as fact - that's why there's an investigation under way," he said.

But don't discount social meda altogether. The administration's biggest break in the manhunt to find the Benghazi killers reportedly came after suspect Ali Harzi posted comments on the attack on social media. That information notified U.S. and Turkish authorities of his existence and triggered a concerted search. Now the AP reports that the Tunisian government has arrested the 28-year-old. His case is in the hands of justice," said Tunisian Interior Ministry spokesman Tarrouch Khaled. Social media, folks. Not helpful all the time. Very helpful sometimes.

Dutch Government Proposes Cyberattacks Against... Everyone

Last week, the Dutch Minister of Safety and Justice asked the Parliament of the Netherlands1 to pass a law allowing police to obtain warrants to do the following:

- Install malware on targets private computers
- Conduct remote searches on local and foreign computers to collect evidence
- Delete data on remote computers in order to disable the accessibility of illegal files.

Requesting assistance from the country where the targetted computer(s) were located would be "preferred" but possibly not required. These proposals are alarming, could have extremely problematic consequences, and may violate European human rights law. As if that wasn't troubling enough, lurking in this letter was a request for something more extreme:

> If the location of a particular computer cannot be determined, the Dutch police would be able to break in without ever contacting foreign authorities.

What would cause the location of a particular computer not to be determinable?

The user might be running software to protect their privacy, such as a proxy, VPN or Tor. Alternatively, the data might be stored in a cloud computing service like Gmail, or Amazon AWS that keeps copies of your data in many countries. If became law, this proposal would allow Dutch police to launch direct attacks against international cloud computing services. It would allow Dutch police to use exploits and malware against privacy systems like the Tor network, endangering the hundreds of thousand of people who use Tor clients every day, and those who publish hidden services in the network. It would, in short, allow Dutch police to use the methods of cyberwar to enforce Dutch law on people living anywhere in the world.

What would the world look like if every country s police were allowed and encouraged to break into computers worldwide to enforce their national laws? We would see a wave of attacks against computers everywhere for blasphemy, hate speech, tax evasion, promoting homosexuality, criticizing the King of Thailand or Atatürk, or disagreements about copyright infringement. Nobody wants to live in a world where every country's laws are simultaneously applied by brute force. That chaos would threaten the stability and usability of entire network.

EFF joins Bits of Freedom, a Digital Rights organization in the Netherlands, in calling for international opposition to this outrageous proposal:

> "The [plan] concerns all countries whose IT-infrastructure may be affected. Bits of Freedom therefore calls on other countries to oppose the proposal. Laws like these make the Internet a more dangerous place."

The Netherlands has a political culture that usually prides itself on moderation and balance. This is a proposal which discards those principles entirely. Join Bits of Freedom and EFF to ensure that this ill-conceived proposal does not become law.

Iran Rejects UN Criticism of Its Cyber Security Rules

Iran rejected criticism from a U.N. human rights investigator over its tighter cyber security rules, saying they are necessary to protect it against cyber attacks and have nothing whatsoever to do with freedom of expression.

In his latest report, U.N. special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, said he was concerned about reports of

government activities "that seemingly infringe on freedom of expression and the right to information."

He said authorities have reportedly targeted websites they see as promoting terrorism, espionage, and economic or social crimes.

These include sites that contain "pornographic content, insult Islam or Government officials, proselytize unrecognized religions, or establish anti-government political groups," Shaheed said.

In a response to his report, presented to U.N. General Assembly delegations this week and sent to Reuters on Thursday by Iran's U.N. mission, Tehran said its cyber policies were unrelated to human rights.

"Establishment of (a) cyber council for securing domestic Internet relates to security and sovereignty of states rather than an issue dealing with promotion and protection of human rights," the Iranian statement said.

"As a country frequently targeted by highly sophisticated vicious cyber attacks, often orchestrated by certain States, Iran has every right and reason to strengthen its cyber space security," the Iranian response said.

"Contrary to the report (and its) assessments based on overly misleading information, this has nothing to do with the freedom of expression at all."

The Islamic republic tightened cyber security after its nuclear program was attacked in 2010 by the Stuxnet computer worm, which caused centrifuges to fail at its main uranium enrichment facility.

Tehran, whose nuclear program is suspected by Western powers and their allies of developing the capacity to produce weapons, accused the United States and Israel of deploying the worm.

Authorities said in April a computer virus was detected inside the control systems of Kharg Island - which handles the vast majority of Iran's crude oil exports - but the terminal remained operational.

Communications and Technology Minister Reza Taqipour said last month that Iran needed to develop its own network to ensure the safety of the country's information.

Iran says its nuclear program is entirely peaceful and has refused to halt it despite increasingly draconian U.N. and Western sanctions.

Shaheed is in New York to present his annual report on rights in Iran to the U.N. General Assembly's Third Committee, which focuses on human rights.

His report details how rights activists in Iran face beatings with batons, mock hangings, rape and threats that family members will be raped or killed.

Earlier this week Shaheed, a former Maldives foreign minister, reported that minority religions in Iran continue to face persecution.

Tehran has so far not granted Shaheed access to the country. In its response, the Islamic republic said his overall report was biased, selective and "fails to reflect the actual situation of human rights in

Iran."

Taxpayer Data Exposed in Cyber Attack on South Carolina Agency

As many as 3.6 million Social Security numbers and 387,000 credit and debit card numbers belonging to South Carolina taxpayers could have been exposed in recent cyber attacks on the state Department of Revenue’s computers, officials said on Friday.

The vast majority of the credit card numbers were encrypted, but about 16,000 were not, meaning the data was fully exposed, state police said.

None of the Social Security numbers were encrypted, said State Law Enforcement Division spokesman Thom Berry.

Berry said the hacker used a foreign Internet Protocol address to gain access to the data.

Officials said no public funds were accessed or put at risk. An investigation into the security breach is ongoing.

Investigators this month discovered two attempts to probe the Department of Revenue’s system in early September, and later learned of an attempt made in late August, state officials said.

Two other intrusions occurred in mid-September. The department determined that the hacker had obtained data for the first time, according to a statement from the state.

Officials said the vulnerability in the system was closed on October 20 and is believed to be secured.

Anyone who filed a South Carolina tax return since 1998 is being urged to find out whether their information was affected. The state will provide those affected with one year of credit monitoring and identity theft protection.

Family of Slain NJ Girl Silent on Facebook Posts

Relatives of a slain 12-year-old girl from southern New Jersey said Thursday they want to avoid jeopardizing the criminal case and will not comment on the revelation that three days before she disappeared, she may have exchanged online messages with one of the teenagers accused of killing her.

"We want swift justice for Autumn," said Paul Spadofora, a great uncle and godfather of Autumn Pasquale, whose body was found in a recycling bin Monday near the teenagers’ home. "We don’t want to jeopardize the case."

Two brothers, 15 and 17, were charged with murder and other crimes against the girl, who would have turned 13 on Oct. 29. Authorities say the younger boy lured her to their home by promising to trade bicycle parts.

Both teens are due in court Friday for a hearing on whether they should

remain in a juvenile detention facility.

A Facebook account that appears to belong to Justin Robinson had a picture posted in August of a BMX bike. On Oct. 17, a post apparently from Autumn asked: "Is tht ur bike?"

The two exchanged a volley of messages in abbreviated language. He answered, "yeuop." She proclaimed, "Thts sexy!" He responded, "lol thx" and later added: "yess cme 2 my house."

The exchange is no longer available on Facebook, but someone took a screenshot and saved it to the photo-sharing site ImageShack.

Autumn disappeared Saturday, three days after the exchange.

The Gloucester County Prosecutor’s Office would not comment on the postings.

Authorities said Anita Saunders, the mother of the two suspects, called police because she was concerned about something one of her son’s posted on Facebook. But police have not disclosed exactly what the posting said.

Gloucester County Prosecutor Sean Dalton said the mother’s tip led investigators to the recycling bin behind a vacant home next to hers where Autumn’s body was found and to her sons.

Authorities have not released the names of the teens because they are charged as juveniles, though prosecutors say they are likely to seek to have the case moved to adult court.

Neighbors and other community members identify the boys as 17-year-old Dante Robinson and 15-year-old Justin Robinson. The boys’ father and maternal grandfather both declined to speak about the boys on Thursday, but did not deny their names. Their names have been widely reported in the media.

Since the boys were arrested on Tuesday, the girl’s family has criticized authorities for not having a more intense search sooner after she was reported missing and asked the state Attorney General’s Office to investigate the response.

Dalton defended his office’s response, saying officials "poured their hearts and souls" into the case. Up to 200 law enforcement officials and hundreds more volunteers joined the search.

New York Man Who Sued Facebook Faces Criminal Charges

A New York man was arrested Friday on charges he forged documents in a multibillion-dollar scheme to defraud Facebook Inc. and its chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, through a lawsuit claiming a huge ownership stake in the Internet company.

Paul Ceglia, 39, a one-time wood pellet salesman from Wellsville, New York, was charged with mail and wire fraud over what federal prosecutors and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service said was fabricated evidence to support his claim to a large stake in Facebook through a 2003 deal with Zuckerberg.

Ceglia’s accusations against Zuckerberg had marked a bizarre twist to Facebook’s march toward its highly anticipated initial public offering in May. Facebook’s origins were also the focus of a separate legal challenge by Zuckerberg’s Harvard University classmates, the twins Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss, in a saga chronicled in the 2010 film, "The Social Network."

Ceglia sued the Silicon Valley company and its chief executive in 2010, claiming that a 2003 contract he signed with Zuckerberg entitled him to a stake in the social media network. Zuckerberg had done programming work for Ceglia’s company, StreetFax.com, while at Harvard University.

This past March, as part of that case, Facebook attorneys released emails sent by Zuckerberg to show Ceglia’s claims were false. The attorneys cited work by forensic experts who found that Ceglia had typed text into a Microsoft Word document and declared it was the text of emails with Zuckerberg.

Ceglia sought "a quick pay day based on a blatant forgery," U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara in Manhattan said in a statement announcing the criminal charges. "Dressing up a fraud as a lawsuit does not immunize you from prosecution."

A lawyer for Ceglia could not immediately be reached for comment.

"Ceglia used the federal court system to perpetuate his fraud and will now be held accountable for his criminal scheme," Orin Snyder, a partner at law firm Gibson Dunn who is representing Facebook and Zuckerberg in the civil case, said in a statement.

In his lawsuit, filed in federal court in Buffalo, New York, Ceglia had claimed that Zuckerberg shared his plans for a social networking site with him while working at StreetFax. He contended that their contract granted him part ownership in Zuckerberg’s project in exchange for a $1,000 investment.

To build his case, Ceglia submitted what he said were emails from Zuckerberg that proved the pair had discussed the project that would eventually become Facebook.

But Zuckerberg said he had not even conceived of the idea for Facebook until December 2003, and submitted his own emails to prove his version of the timeline.

Ceglia went through a string of lawyers from prominent firms, including DLA Piper and Milberg, who worked with him on the case but later withdrew.

Ceglia was arrested at his home on Friday morning and appeared in federal court in Buffalo in the afternoon. In the hearing, a federal judge set bail at $21,000 and stayed the bail order until Monday at noon to give prosecutors a chance to appeal it, authorities said.

Each of the charges against him carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

Investigators for the Postal Inspection Service, which is conducting the probe, made the arrest following Ceglia’s return to the United States this week after spending time out of the country, according to a source familiar with the matter who was not authorized to speak publicly on the

case.

The judge in Friday's hearing ordered Ceglia and his family to surrender their travel documents.

Separately on Friday, Massachusetts fined Citigroup Inc $2 million to settle charges that two bank analysts improperly released confidential information about Facebook's financials before the technology company went public.

The case is USA v. Paul Ceglia, U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York.

Get The New YouTube Design With This Google Chrome Extension

If you can't wait for YouTube to roll-out their latest redesign, there's a hack to get the new version now.

OMG!Chrome! found a Google extension that can be installed in your browser in under 30 seconds and will update the site's entire design.

The site's upgrade will feature a Google search bar at the top of each page, a video counter for subscriptions along the lefthand column, and profile pictures next to users' comments.

And if you see any glitches with the site after the hack, OMG!Chrome! says using this alternate code is a good fix:

```
document.cookie="VISITOR_INFO1_LIVE=jZNC3DCddAk; path=/;
domain=.youtube.com";window.location.reload();
```

Is the iPad Mini Worth Buying?

Apple has unveiled a new member of the family: the iPad Mini. This device is a clear response to the market pressure the cheaper Amazon Kindle Fire HD and the Nexus 7 have placed on the existing iPad. So how does this scaled down version of the iPad compare with its newly refreshed big brother and the Android tablets that still come in at a lower price?

Screen Size: iPad Mini's screen comes in at 7.9 inches, compared to the 9.7 inch screen of the iPad and the 7 inch screens of the Kindle Fire HD and the Nexus 7. With a narrower bezel, iPad Mini fits a bit more screen into the same real estate.

Resolution: 1024x768 this is not the Retina display that Apple touts as its high end screens on the iPhone 5 and the bigger iPad. Rather, it's the same resolution as the iPad 2, but with more pixels per inch. Also, the Nexus 7 and Kindle Fire HD have higher resolution 1280x800 screens.

Thickness: 7.2mm thick that's roughly 1/3 of an inch, or a little thinner than a pencil, and significantly thinner than either of the leading competitors.

Weight: .68 pounds, 53% lighter than the fourth-generation iPad. Competing

Android tablets weigh slightly more: Nexus 7 tips the scales at .75 lbs, and the Kindle Fire HD at .88 lbs.

Processor: The dual core A5 chip is same as the iPad 2 that came out in 2011, and even Apple says the A6 chip in the iPad 4 and the iPhone 5 is twice as fast for some tasks as the A5. The Nexus 7 has a newer quad-core NVIDIA Tegra 3 processor and the Kindle Fire HD has a 1.2 GHz Dual Core processor, but you can only compare the performance of these processors against the iPad once you benchmark them in the real world; the numbers and specs don't tell you everything. But I'd give the edge to the Nexus 7 purely on hardware.

Cameras: iPad Mini: front and rear-facing cameras. The camera on the back is a 5 megapixel, same as the iPad 4 but lower res than the iPhone 5's 8 MP camera. The Nexus and Amazon tablets have only front facing cameras that are lower resolution than the Mini.

The Mini will come in a Wifi-only model and an LTE version with access to cellular networks on the go. It will use the new smaller lightning connector so you'll need all new charging cords and adapters if you have lots of accessories with the previous 30-pin connector.

Apple says it gets 10 hours of battery life, is made primarily of aluminum & glass, and it comes in both black and white. It will be available for preorder on Friday, October 26 and is set to ship November 2.

iPad Mini 16GB WiFi only $329 ($459 for the 16GB with LTE cellular connectivity)
iPad 4 16GB WiFi only $499
Kindle Fire HD 16GB $199
Nexus 7 16GB: $249 But rumors are flying of an even cheaper Nexus tablet releasing next week and/or a big price cut on the Google tablet in time for the holidays.

Nothing about the technical specs of the tablets makes any one of them a clear winner. Apple has an advantage in that the user-experience on the iPad and IOS is preferred by many, myself included. After living with both flavors, it's just easier, cleaner, and less hassle for me to use an iPad over a Nexus 7. In my opinion, the iPad Mini will benefit from that advantage as well.

But if I were a committed Android phone user, if my digital media was all purchased from Amazon or the Google Play store, or if price was my only consideration, I would NOT get the iPad Mini.

The final decision these days is about ecosystem- where are you going to buy and live? In Google/Amazon world or in Apple world?

If Apple had priced the mini in the $249 range, I'd say they would have nailed the coffin shut on competing tablets. But at $329 that's still a steep price tag, and many will find Android and Amazon tablets under the Christmas tree this year and enjoy them almost as much as those who unwrap the iPad Mini that costs $130 more.

Ethics statement: I have used both an iPhone and a Samsung Galaxy phone this year. I have tested and lived with the iPad and the Nexus 7 and the Kindle Fire HD. I love a deal and always wish that the cheaper one were as good or better than the more expensive one. Sometimes that's true, sometimes it's not. I am giving you my honest opinion and I am not paid for recommendations.

Windows 8: Make-or-Break Moment for Microsoft CEO

Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer can’t afford to be wrong about Windows 8.

On Thursday, Microsoft will unveil a dramatic overhaul of its ubiquitous Windows operating system. If it flops, the failure will reinforce perceptions that Microsoft is falling behind competitors such as Apple, Google and Amazon as its stranglehold on personal computers becomes less relevant in an era of smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices.

If Ballmer is right, Windows 8 will prove that the world’s largest software maker still has the technological chops and marketing muscle to shape the future of computing.

"This is going to be his defining moment," said technology industry analyst Patrick Moorhead of Moor Insights & Strategy. Ballmer’s "legacy will be looked at as what he did or didn’t do with Windows 8. If Windows 8 is not a success, a lot of people will be looking for Microsoft to make a change at the CEO level."

Windows 8 is designed to run on PCs and tablet computers, heralding the biggest change to the industry’s dominant operating system in at least 17 years. It also marks the first time that Microsoft has made touch-screen control the top priority, though the system can still be switched into the familiar desktop mode that allows for control by keyboard and mouse.

Ballmer sees Windows 8 as the catalyst for a new era at Microsoft. He wants the operating system to ensure the company plays an integral role on all the important screens in people’s lives PCs, smartphones, tablets and televisions.

"We are trying to re-imagine the world from the ground up with Windows 8," Ballmer told The Seattle Times. He declined to be interviewed for this story.

Early reaction has been mixed. Some reviewers like the way the system greets users with a mosaic of tiles displaying applications instead of relying on the desktop icons that served as the welcome mat for years. Critics say it’s a confusing jumble that will frustrate users accustomed to the older versions, particularly when they switch to desktop mode and don’t see the familiar "start" button and menu.

Windows 8 will hit the market backed by an estimated $1 billion marketing campaign. The advertising frenzy is just one measure of how important Windows 8 is to Microsoft’s future.

Ballmer’s margin for error is slim after being consistently outpaced by Apple and Google in his nearly 13 years as CEO. During his tenure, Microsoft’s stock has lost nearly half its value, wiping out more than $200 billion in shareholder wealth.

But the company’s board hasn’t expressed any public dissatisfaction with Ballmer, who is Microsoft’s second-largest shareholder with a 4 percent stake worth $9 billion. Only his good friend and predecessor, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, owns more of the company’s stock. Gates has a 5.5 percent stake.

Since Ballmer succeeded Gates as CEO in January 2000, Microsoft’s annual revenue has nearly quadrupled to $74 billion and expanded into lucrative new territory with its popular Xbox 360 video game console, which has given the company a platform for delivering services to television sets. But Microsoft has been slow to respond to technology shifts and has made some costly missteps trying to catch up.

Some of the best-known blunders include the company’s iPod clone, the Zune, and its $6.3 billion acquisition of Internet ad service aQuantive.

Ballmer, 56, has spent most of his life at Microsoft. He was attending Stanford University’s graduate school of business in 1980 when Gates, a former classmate at Harvard University, persuaded him to drop out and become one of the startup’s first 30 employees. He brought more business savvy to the operation just as the company began providing an operating system for IBM Corp.’s first personal computer.

Just two weeks before Ballmer took over, Microsoft’s stock reached its peak price. The dot-com bust quickly deflated that market value, and the company became locked in antitrust battles in the U.S. and Europe that distracted management for years.

The biggest question hovering over Windows 8: Is it innovative and elegant enough to lure consumers who are increasingly fond of smartphones, tablets and other sleek gadgets? Those mobile devices have been setting industry standards while Microsoft engineers have spent two years designing a new operating system.

And Windows 8 must address not only the upheaval in the computing market since Windows 7 came out in 2009, but also have the flexibility to adjust to future shifts in technology before Microsoft releases another version in two or three years.

"It doesn’t seem like Microsoft is really pushing consumers into the future with Windows 8," said Forrester Research analyst Sarah Rotman Epps. "What Microsoft has done is like buying a pair of shoes for a kid. The shoes may fit exactly right today, but those shoes probably won’t fit six months from now."

Previous versions of Windows and other Microsoft products such as Office are so deeply embedded in companies and government agencies that Microsoft is still assured a steady stream of revenue from that segment of the market. That loyal base of customers is one of the reasons that Microsoft is expected to earn $25 billion on revenue of $80 billion in its current fiscal year ending next June.

"This isn’t a company that is on the edge of extinction, like some people would have you think," said BGC Financial analyst Colin Gillis. "What we are seeing with Windows 8 is classic Microsoft. They let the (technology) market lead and then they follow."

But investors want to see Microsoft do something more. The nagging fear on Wall Street is that the PC industry is past its prime and heading into a gradual decline that will pull down Microsoft, too.

The signs of decay have been proliferating since Apple released the iPad in 2010, hatching a tablet computer market that has combined with an already vibrant smartphone market to siphon away technology spending that used to go toward the latest PCs.

Worldwide PC sales year are expected to decline this year for the first time since 2001, according to the research firm ISH iSuppli. It's a drop of just 1 percent, but it underscores a troubling trend that has been hurting Microsoft.

The shift to mobile devices has whittled Microsoft's worldwide share of the computing device market from 67 percent in 2008 to about 30 percent today, estimates Forrester Research analyst Frank Gillett. Thanks to its Android software for phones and tablets, Google is now the leader with a 40 percent share of the computing device market. Apple stands at 20 percent.

Analysts don't expect Microsoft's corporate and government customers to immediately embrace the new system, no matter how much it's hyped. About half of this traditionally cautious group of customers still haven't upgraded to Windows 7. Most analysts expect companies and government to hold off on switching to Windows 8 for at least another year.

Ballmer hopes to accelerate the changeover by making Microsoft's Office software suite more compelling, with the help of two major acquisitions.

Microsoft bought the video chat service Skype for $8.5 billion last year and in June agreed to pay $1.2 billion for Yammer, a service the builds social networking services within companies. Both are expected to become key features within Office to make it easier for workers to connect and collaborate with their peers and customers.

Ballmer also has won praise from analysts for striking potentially fruitful partnerships with Yahoo Inc. and Nokia. Microsoft now provides Yahoo with much of the same technology that runs its Bing search engine. The Yahoo deal provides Microsoft with 12 percent of the revenue from the ads shown alongside search results on Yahoo's website.

The Nokia alliance ensured Windows 8 would be the operating system on that company's latest line of smartphones, a potentially valuable platform if Nokia is able to regain some of the market share it has lost in mobile phones during the past five years.

But none of that has yet restored the luster Microsoft had on Wall Street when Gates was in charge.

Ballmer's initially dismissed emerging threats from Google and Apple. He consistently pooh-poohed Google as a one-trick company during its early years and in 2007 declared: "No chance that the iPhone is going to get any significant market share."

Those were some of his biggest mistakes, detractors say. Google quickly made important inroads in Internet video, online maps, email and mobile computing and contributed to the damage that the iPhone and iPad have done to Microsoft and its partners in the PC market.

Apple's meteoric rise has been especially painful for Microsoft. When Steve Jobs returned to run Apple in 1997, the company was so bad off that it needed a $150 million infusion from Microsoft to stay afloat. Now Apple has a market value of $570 billion more than double Microsoft's $250 billion.

On Tuesday, Apple got a chance to upstage Microsoft when CEO Tim Cook showed off the iPad Mini, a smaller and less expensive version of its

top-selling tablet.

On Thursday in New York, Ballmer will herald the arrival of the most important product of his reign. The market's response to Windows 8 may determine whether it turns out to be the opening act in his vindication or one of his final moments in the spotlight.

IE 10 'Preview' for Windows 7 Arriving Mid-November

Microsoft announced that it plans to support Internet Explorer 10 on Windows 7 and will release a "preview" next month.

The preview of the IE 10 browser is scheduled for release in "mid-November." Microsoft hasn't disclosed a final release-to-Web date for IE 10 on Windows 7 yet. It's going to proceed based on testing feedback it gets from users, according to a Microsoft blog post attributed to Rob Mauceri, group program manager of Internet Explorer.

Microsoft has been talkative about IE 10 on Windows 8, which runs on the "desktop" and "Metro" user interface (UI) sides of the Windows 8 operating system. On Windows RT, it's thought that IE 10 runs on the desktop side or on some sort of hybrid UI mode that Microsoft calls a "Metro style enabled browser." In any case, the completed IE 10 products for Windows 8 and Windows RT will be publicly available on October 26, which is when Microsoft releases Windows 8 and its Surface Windows RT tablet - both of which will ship with the IE 10 browser. However, this latest announcement appears to be the first discussion from Microsoft in a while about IE 10 on Windows 7, which is a much more likely use-case scenario at this point.

Many may have thought that IE 10 for Windows 7 was already available, but a "guide for developers" Microsoft document, dated from September, makes it clear that Microsoft never got past an early "platform preview" build of IE 10 for Windows 7.

"Internet Explorer 10 is not currently available for Windows 7," the guide states. "The most recent release for Windows 7 was Internet Explorer 10 Platform Preview Build 2, on June 29, 2011. Therefore, you will notice that the newer features mentioned in this guide are not yet available in the most recent version of IE10 Platform Preview for Windows 7."

It is unclear, and somewhat peculiar, why it will take the Microsoft team longer to deliver IE 10 on Window 7 than on Windows 8. A Microsoft spokesperson said today via e-mail that the company had nothing to share on the matter.

IE 10 will be notable for not allowing plug-ins, except for a built-in and touch-optimized Adobe Flash Player plug-in. Microsoft announced in May it would include the Flash Player for both the "desktop" and "Metro" user interfaces of Windows 8. This exception to the no plug-ins approach was made because many Web sites do not yet support native HTML 5 graphics, and they still need to depend on Flash. It's not clear at this point if IE 10 for Windows 7 will come with this built-in Flash Player or not.

It turns out that there are a lot of IE 10 nuances to track - and that's just on the Windows 8 side. For instance, even Microsoft Cofounder Paul Allen was perplexed by how IE 10 behaves across the two Windows 8 UIs (desktop and Metro) in his review of Windows 8. Allen reviewed an early

version of Windows 8, finding that bookmarks in IE 10 on one side the OS weren't available to IE 10 on the other side.

Apparently, Microsoft has solved this bookmark (or favorites) perplexity in a later build of the OS. A September-published MSDN library article on IE 10 on Windows 8 suggests as much, although RSS feeds still are stuck on one side of the Windows 8 UI.

"Your RSS feeds are only available from Internet Explorer for the desktop, but your favorites, frequent sites, history, and typed URLs are shared between the two browsing experiences," the document explains.

Instead of using the terms, "Metro" and "desktop," this library article refers to the two Windows 8 UIs as "Windows UI" and "desktop." Microsoft still hasn't said what it will call the Metro side after hinting in August that it will change the name. It's not known why Microsoft wants to change it.

There are a bunch of other IE 10 anomalies when running it on Windows 8. For those using the "Microsoft account" feature of Windows 8, IE 10's history, favorites and frequently typed URLs will roam across Windows 8 machines. Pinned sites will also be available across machines on startup, but any changes aren't synched. If sites are pinned to the desktop taskbar, they don't roam at all, according to the library article.

Moreover, which IE 10 UI is used to open a pinned site depends on which browser was specified by the Windows 8 user as the default browser. This peculiarity has to do with Microsoft's concept of a "Metro style enabled desktop browser," which has been the subject of complaints by third-party browser makers, such as Mozilla. In any case, Microsoft's document indicates that IE 10 needs to be specified as the default browser on the Metro side of Windows 8 in order to open pinned sites on the Metro side, as indicated here:

"Note: Internet Explorer in the Windows UI is a type of Metro style enabled desktop browser. As such, pinned site tiles from the new Windows UI Start screen will only open in it if it's the default Metro style enabled desktop browser - otherwise they'll open in Internet Explorer for the desktop. The downloadable document "Developing a Metro style enabled desktop browser" from "White papers for Metro style apps" provides more info."

Security is a bit different between the Metro and desktop sides of Windows 8. A new "enhanced protected mode" in IE 10, which is a sandbox security feature that leverages Microsoft's AppContainer technology, is turned on by default on the Metro side of Windows 8, but it's turned off by default on the desktop side. According to an earlier description by Microsoft, enhanced protected mode for Windows 7 just enables 64-bit processes to run in IE 10's browser tabs, but it doesn't add any additional security protections to the browser.

This nuance about the bits and enhanced protected mode also relates the two UIs of Windows 8. The Metro-style IE 10 runs processes at 64-bit by default, but those processes are run at 32-bit by default on the desktop side. Users can change that default to 64-bit by enabling enhanced protected mode for the desktop version of the browser, provided that the underlying Windows operating system also is 64 bit, Microsoft has explained.

Microsoft Fresh Out of $499 Surface RTs After One Day of Pre-orders

This may be a good sign for Microsoft: a little over a day after putting its new Surface RT tablet up for pre-order, the entry-level $499 version of the tablet has sold out. Its estimated shipping time has slipped from October 26, Windows 8's release date, to a more nebulous "within three weeks."

What we don't know is how many Surface RT units Microsoft has manufactured for this initial run. The $599 and $699 models, both of which include the much-ballyhooed keyboard covers, continue to be available for delivery by October 26, which either suggests that interest isn't so high that people are clamoring for any Surface model they can get, or that Microsoft's margins on the upper-end models are higher, and that they've simply chosen to allocate more of them for shipment.

At the very least, this early sellout is a sign that at least a few people are eager to get Microsoft's first serious attempt at building PC hardware into their hands. Early Android tablets were hampered by the fact that they cost the same amount as the much higher-profile iPad, and have only found serious mainstream success after models like the Kindle Fire and Nexus 7 brought tablet prices down. With the amount of money and time that Microsoft has been spending on advertising and PR for Windows 8 and the Surface, it's probably hoping to avoid a similar fate.

Surface Tablet Buzz Starts, But Windows 8 Excitement Muted

U.S. shoppers woke up with mild Surface fever on Friday, lining up in moderate numbers to buy Microsoft's groundbreaking tablet computer designed to challenge Apple's iPad.

The global debut of the Windows 8 operating system was greeted with pockets of enthusiasm, but not the mania reserved for some previous Apple Inc. launches.

Microsoft is positioning the slick new computing device, which runs a limited version of Windows and Office with a thin, click-on keyboard cover, as a perfect combination of PC and tablet that is good for work as well as entertainment.

"I like the flexibility of having the keyboard and the touch capability," said Mike Gipe, 50, who works in sales for bank Barclays, and was planning to buy a Surface tablet at Microsoft's pop-up store in Times Square in New York.

"It's the combination of having the consumer stuff and the work stuff," he said, looking forward to using Excel spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations on the new device.

The Times Square store was the first to sell the Surface - Microsoft's first ever own-brand computer - and other Windows 8 devices late on Thursday and will be open through the holiday shopping season. On Friday morning it was crowded with a mix of tourists and local office workers, but the cash tills were not jammed.

"With the other tablets you’re a consumer. With this you can have input," said Peter Townsend, on vacation in New York from Australia with his wife, who bought a Surface tablet because he liked the keyboard.

Mark Pauluch, 28, who works for a New York private equity firm, said he would like a Surface because he does not want to take a laptop on a plane, but was disappointed when the sales representative told him the wifi-only Surface would not work with Cisco VPN networking.

"I can’t use this to replace my work laptop unless it supports VPN," he said.

Elsewhere in the United States, there was solid but not overwhelming interest for the Surface.

"It’s a good tablet. I am not a huge i-anything fan, I like Windows," said Matt Shanahan, a software developer who drove four hours to the tiny Michigan Avenue pop-up store in Chicago from Grand Rapids, Michigan to buy a Surface. "My friend and I are software developers and this gives us an opportunity to develop new apps," he said.

In a pop-up store at the San Francisco Centre mall about 50 people lined up to buy the new Surface.

"On an iPad you have to use half the screen for a keyboard, or buy an accessory. I love that the Surface is so integrated, that you can type and use Word and all my other programs," said Malte von Sehested, a textbook creator who bought a Surface.

"With the Surface you get a steeper learning curve - I had to get someone to show me how to side-swipe, swipe out to get the menus for instance," he said. "It may take a week, before it all becomes natural. That could be a problem for Microsoft. My old dad, he would get hit by that steeper learning curve."

Wall Street and tech industry experts failed to show great enthusiasm for Windows 8, but were prepared to give Microsoft time to succeed.

"Microsoft did not come out with Windows 8 thinking it will be an overnight success," said Daniel Ives, an analyst at FBR Capital Markets. "But there’s hope that this could be the silver bullet of growth (for Microsoft) as well as giving the PC industry some optimism that there’s better days ahead."

The next six to 12 months is a "crucial period" for Microsoft to get traction with consumers, added Ives.

Sarah Rotman Epps, an analyst at tech research firm Forrester, said consumers may be best served waiting for tablets running the full Windows 8 Pro and Intel Corp chips, which are due out early next year.

"Windows 8 has a lot of great features, but RT has a long way to go," she said, citing a lack of apps and poor video performance on the Surface.

"It’s not really a PC. RT is too restricted. Some people will be happier with the full Windows 8," she said.

One of the world’s oldest commercial computers has been brought back to life by two enthusiasts in a barn in Kent.

The ICT1301 computer, known as Flossie, was restored to working order on its 50th anniversary by engineers Roger Holmes and Rod Brown in Bethersden.

The 20ft (6m) by 22ft machine was built to replace rows of clerks doing office work and featured in the 1974 James Bond film The Man With The Golden Gun.

Bought for £200 in 2003, it has 100th of the power of a smartphone.

Mr Holmes, a Computer Conservation Society volunteer, said it was a unique machine important for putting modern technology into context.
Blake’s 7

He said he was negotiating with various organisations to find it a new home.

"It’s a big beast. I would like it go somewhere they will continue to keep it running," he said.

"If it is kept behind a case, people will not be able to experience what it was like in the 1960s.
Maud Adams, Roger Moore and Britt Ekland from the 1974 film The Man with the Golden Gun Flossie was used as a prop in Bond film The Man With The Golden Gun

"With it working, people can walk in, hear it, smell it and almost taste it and have a flavour of how it was back then."

Flossie originally cost £250,000 to build in 1962, the equivalent of £4.2m today.

It has 100,000 punch cards and 27 reels of magnetic tape, both to record data, and its 12 kilobytes of memory alone weigh half a tonne.

Each piece of memory has five lengths of wire threaded by hand.

Mr Brown said: "You have to remember that file reels in those days were multi-reel, so at 10 meg a reel, 27 reels, we’re up to a quarter of a gigabyte - and 50 years ago that was a lot of data."

Mr Holmes said Flossie took the drudgery out of office work in the 1960s, but also cost jobs.

"Before this, there were huge great rooms 100ft square full of clerks doing nothing but calculation, and recording things, and taking the files out, and changing them, and putting them back again - and they all became redundant," he said.

Flossie was used as a prop in Bond film The Man With The Golden Gun starring Roger Moore and also in two BBC TV series - Doctor Who and Blake’s 7.

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